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mitting adultery is motivated by emulation', 'Make your harvest look big, otherwise your enemies will rejoice'.[1]

The pride in the family unity and name is associated with its labour on the land. One can see the effect of the driving motive of emulation in the appearance of the outer sections nearer to the road or to the canal. Special attention is always given to these sections, as they are usually the most elevated and best cultivated sections of the land. The main ideal for which every family strives is to be 'mastourah', which literally means to be covered, or, in other words, to be balanced and publicly approved and not exposed to outside shaming. The special attention given to the outer sections of the field would at least rid the farmer of shame, if the rest of his field were not properly cultivated. Esteem and honour are accorded by the villagers to those who have made a success of their farming, and this is usually mixed up with a feeling of envy. To be an industrious farmer attending to his business is a good qualification for a youth about to get married, while slothfulness militates against his chances. Parents stimulate their sons of marriageable age to work hard as an incentive for their marriage as early as possible.

In a discussion of livelihood in the village, an evaluation of the standard of living is a necessary step for the full appreciation of the villagers' life. It has been made clear by anthropologists that the standard of living is not only a matter of production and consumption, but equally depends on the cultural values that govern these processes. 'In no society do we find people consuming whatever comes to hand or producing the minimum necessary for existence with the least possible effort. Man is a rational being, and hence there are reasons to be discovered for his choice of food and clothing and for the efforts which he makes to produce the objects of his choice.'[2] These cultural premises are implicit in every society, determining, to a great extent, the ways in which individuals handle their 'material culture'.[3]

In the previous pages reference has been made to some of the social incentives for work, but accumulation of wealth has not been included. For contentment with what one possesses, as predestined by God, is the keynote of the villagers' happiness. In some dwellings and guest houses this ideal is written on the wall, 'Contentment is an inexhaustible treasure'. One should not amass wealth, but should spend it in pious acts, otherwise, according to the Koran, as Ali recited, 'With the gold and silver a man accumulates he would be seared on the forehead, on the side, and on the

[1] A popular story is told about a jealous farmer whose neighbour enquired from him about the amount of fertiliser he distributed in every section (hod). He told him that he usually put two basketfuls; and thus the neighbour followed his advice. But later on the latter found that his cultivation was not as good as that of the farmer, and discovered that it was due to the fact that his neighbour used to distribute three baskets, and not two as he had told him.

[2] Margaret Read, *Native Standards of Living and the African Culture Change*, p. 11.

[3] For a quantitative assessment of the standard of living in Silwa, see Appendix III.

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back'. He added that the prophetic tradition runs that if people are contented, God will look after them as He looks after the birds that leave their nests on feeling hungry and return to them well satisfied. Another prophetic tradition maintains that there are two types of people whose hunger is never satisfied, the searcher for knowledge and the searcher for wealth, and while the first is praised the second is condemned. This does not mean that the Koran or the prophetic tradition encourages apathy, as one can quote other statements conducive to hard work. But the mere fact that the statements, related by Ali and uttered by a great number of the literate villagers, are those exalting contentment, asceticism and submission to fate, to the exclusion of any others, shows a kind of selectivity in values entertained by the villagers. The writer was struck, however, by the amount of frugality and economic calculations of the villagers, in spite of their being frequently dubbed as fatalists. Their fatalism is usually a justification for the misfortune that befalls them, as epitomized by their saying, 'What is written on the forehead, must be seen by the eye'. On the other hand, they have another maxim saying that 'If one's back itches, there's nothing like one's finger to scratch it and give comfort'. Contentment thus actually means satisfaction with what one can get without the undue strain of striving to get ahead or the strenuous efforts for satisfying numerous material demands. It would be very difficult, with the fellah's simple tools and the sweat involved in his work, to convince him that his lot could be improved by more work. 'Both attitudes—contentment and acquisitiveness—have their own social context. Contentment is adopted in a close economy; acquisitiveness in an expanding economy. Without economic opportunities the striving for material gain is a disturbance to existing order, since it means the plunder of wealth from others. Whatever form this plunder may take, it is a curse to the common man. Therefore, to accept and be satisfied with the social role and material rewards given by the society is essential. But when economic opportunity develops through the development of technology, and when wealth can be acquired through exploitation of nature instead of through the exploitation of man, the doctrine of contentment becomes reactionary because it restricts individual initiative.'[1]

The attitude of contentment manifests itself also in those villagers who work in towns, for immediately they feel that they have enough money to last them for some time, they return to the village to live amongst their people till they run short of money, whereupon they return to the town.

Contentment as a value, however, does not, of course, prevent the villagers from looking at things and acts in economic terms. Even the welter of their formal and informal social contacts has an economic significance. Help given to friends and relatives is a debt which is expected to be returned, in spite of the magnanimous phrases associated with its rendering, such as 'There is no calculation between us' or 'It makes no difference between friends'.

[1] H. Fei and C. Chang, *Earthbound China*, London, 1949, p. 84.

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Thus it is obvious that most of the Government institutions have not yielded the results expected from them in the village. So far the health unit, the agricultural bank, and the compulsory school have proved to be failures. This is mainly attributed to the lack of co-operation from the villagers as a result of the clash between their traditional views and practices and the new institutions, the purposes of which have never been explained or made comprehensible to the villagers.

It is appropriate here also to mention the ideal of hospitality which has been affected by the process of social change. The villagers regret the waning of the idea of hospitality defined in terms of ability to render it when the occasion arises. Hospitality is conceived also in terms of offering food to guests, relatives, or casual *en route* visitors to the village. It also involves distributing wealth on ceremonial occasions such as circumcision and wedding, the failure of which would subject a person to severe criticism. To be able to conform to these standards is one of the chief attributes of authority, prestige, self-respect, and social recognition. The ideal personality type, alongside with the pious man, is the hospitable man. The common saying runs: 'He who is hospitable will never suffer in this world.' The hospitable person should offer without being asked, and should insist when the receiver is reluctant to accept; otherwise his hospitality is like that of the boatmen—who, being uncertain of their food resources, cannot be hospitable. By offering hospitality a person in fact creates bonds between himself and the partakers, where the latter respond in terms of respect, service, reciprocal hospitality, or at least prayers, in the case of the poor. The ideal is certainly that of giving away, and not of accumulating. Those who accumulate without giving are described as 'rotting', or like the 'cord that holds the knickers'—implying that they are insignificant and socially unworthy of recognition.

This gradual dwindling of hospitality, so much deplored by the villagers, is mainly due to the fact that there are few families in the village who can afford to adopt the traditional ideal. This is certainly a result of the change in the economic structure of the village due to the constant division of land and the increase in population. Moreover, with increasing contacts with city ways, the villagers are more aware of the importance of money and the personal benefits derived from its purchasing power; and the recognition attached to hospitality, though upheld and valued as an ideal, is offset by the new acquisitive spirit. In this connection, my informant, Ali, told me that in the good old days if a visitor expressed his appreciation of an object or a utensil, the host usually offered it to him, but this is no longer the general rule. The spirit, however, still persists in the case of a woman visitor who, for instance, admires the tea offered to

there developed, in the 9th and 10th centuries, the banking institutions and commercial customs which were to become those of Europe, and which are quite inconsistent with the Quranic Law'. *Muslim Institutions* (translated from the French), London, 1950, pp. 190–1.

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her whereupon her hostess usually wraps some dry tea to take with her, and the same might happen in the case of a pot or a jar which could be spared, being given to the admirer. The spirit of giving away is also reflected in the often-heard word 'itfaddal' (you may have it), which Egyptians in general say when a person admires any of the articles of clothes, food, or any possessions.

The loosening of respect relationships is reflected in the attitude of some people with regard to the learned men and the so-called 'Koran-carriers'. Their absolute authority is dwindling, and one occasionally hears criticism of their knowledge compared to the 'ulema of the town. One villager once dubbed them as good for nothing except for eating during the ceremonies.

On the whole, people who have stayed for a long time working in town show a great deal of dissatisfaction with the village way of life. Although the majority of them feel obliged to send money to their parents, relatives, families and children, they resent the excessive demands of their relatives, and claim that towns people are free from such demands. One of the people who was working in Cairo complained to the writer that his relatives, who were supposed to be responsible for his land and sheep, did not attend to them properly while he was away. He continued, 'They only want you to give them tea and gifts on your return, and turn their backs on finding that you have not brought what they expect from you'.

The impact of urban life with its increasing pressures on the village has resulted in more and more strains in social living. The traditional social structure based on the solidarity of family and clan is losing some of its cohesive forces. The absolute authority of the old folks had been supreme, and no competition between old and young could ever be entertained. Now, the exception is not rare. The prestige and authority based on land property have also been questioned and is expressed in the common saying 'The beans are given to those who have no teeth'. With the social controls based on authority of age, power vested in the Arab councils, prestige of learned men in the village, go the clash between the ideal of hospitality and economic acquisitiveness, the emphasis on family rather than the clan, and a vague search for minding one's own business.

One meets, however, those few individuals who have spent part of their life in the city, criticizing some of the village ways of life such as pride in the clan or the extended family; they praise wealth rather than generosity, and individualism than family ties. Such persons are pitied by their relatives as 'being influenced by the life of "being away" ghurba' or as having 'an eye on Paradise and another on Hell'. In other words, such expressions are the villagers' way of describing 'the marginal man'.[1]

Such changes of social attitudes, together with the increasing pressures of economic conditions, have created an atmosphere of insecurity and

[1] See Everett Stonequist, *The Marginal Man, A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict*, New York, 1937.

the fellaheen are mere 'creatures', in which there is no point 565
in interesting oneself, and which it is considered good form 369
to know nothing about. Faced with the simplest of queries about them, the rich often show an ignorance which makes it quite clear that such questions have never occured to them, and arouse no curiosity. Even the best of them, while deploring the dullness and hidebound habits of the fellah, will do nothing to help him that might lessen their own income. All this maintains the gulf between the two extremes.

There is, however, a country middle class, consisting of 565
medium landowners. Like the smallholders, they are closely 423
attached to the village. Conservative, gain-loving and un- 181
pretentious, they live in the country and keep a close watch on the yield of their feddans. At feasts and funerals they give generously to their poor neighbours. From this class are drawn the pupils who fill the primary and secondary schools in the provinces, the students of the religious institutes dependent on Al-Azhar, the Government employees, and a number of police officers. It has produced the great men of contemporary Egypt, such as Sheikh Mohammed Abdou, Saad Zaghloul Pasha, Nahas Pasha, and Dr Taha Hussein.

These patriarchal families are, however, becoming fewer 556
and fewer. One reason is the growth of their wealth and 565
ambition. The second generation makes its way into the 166
higher levels, and settles in Cairo or Alexandria. This exodus from the fields was largely encouraged by the boom of 1919-20, but apart from this the westernised education of the young and the taste for European things have produced a distaste for country life. Cairo and Alexandria, during the last fifteen years, have developed considerably in size and in amenities. Every year there is a new influx of wealthy provincials from the chief towns and villages in all the mudiriyas. Villas and blocks of flats spring up everywhere and luxury shops do a thriving trade.

A second reason for the decay of this middle class 565
is the splitting up of estates by inheritance, for families 428
are large. According to Moslem Law, which is univer- 423
sally applicable, the sons receive two parts each to the daughter's one. It is by no means unusual to find the grandson of a man who had 40 feddans inheriting no more than one, so that he falls back to the level of the fellaheen.

423 425 426 Small properties do not result solely from the subdivision of inheritances, but also from the acquisition of tiny plots as money becomes available. The fellah is so hungry for land that he buys it, more often than not, at a ruinous price; this is also partly because he buys only a few *kirats* at a time. In order to pay for it he supplements his savings by contracting a debt.

423 425 426 556 The demand is so high that the lots are sold for the best price offered, and, in forced sales, by auction. Here is an example of what may happen. Ten feddans are on sale for L.E. 400. A dozen fellaheen join together to buy them at that price, and divide them up among themselves. But a rich landowner of the neighbourhood gets wind of the business. He arrives a few hours before the sale and sits down at a café in full view of everybody. He boasts openly that he is ready to buy the lot at no matter what price. The fellaheen, threatened with disappointment, come up and beg him to withdraw, offering money as compensation. He lets them plead, bargains with them, then pockets his gains and leaves the village, in high glee at the success of his stratagem, which he will repeat when opportunity offers. The fellaheen, who have given him L.E. 10 for nothing, think the bargain good.

The Government

656 [312] The Government, by its control of the land, and still more of the water, is supreme over capital and labour, and over the peasant class. As master of the irrigation system, it assumes for the fellah all the power and importance of the Nile. The more the State regulates the river, the greater the dependence on it of both soil and men of the soil.

As Egypt is an agricultural country, almost every Government organisation is, in the long run, giving orders to the fellah. In industry and in the large towns, the Government willingly entrusts the public services to private enterprise. In agricultural matters, on the contrary, it assumes many functions which in other countries are undertaken by private persons. So much so that for the rural population the Government is a kind of overriding providence, while the fellah is regarded by the Government as a helpless child, who has constantly to be ordered about and protected from his own ignorance.